

HELL AND HEAVEN.

S E R M O N,

ON

MATTHEW xxiv. 46.



*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment :
but the righteous into life eternal.*



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THAT there are two eternal states, the one of happiness, and the other of misery, in one of which each of us will soon be fixed, is a truth which most men profess to believe. But if we look at the actions of most men, and these speak louder than their words, we are forced to say with the scripture—"all men have not faith." A true belief of an eternal hell, and an eternal heaven, cannot fail to make us fly from the one, and endeavour to secure the other. But even where we may hope there is a settled belief of these things, it must be owned, that through the cares and labours, or pleasures of life, they do not make so strong an impression upon us as they ought, nor are we so diligent in our preparation for eternity as we should be. It will be therefore profitable for us to consider those two states of hell and heaven, which are spoken of in the text ; which tells us what will be the immediate consequence of the sentences which Christ, the great Judge of quick and dead, shall pronounce on all mankind, at the great day. To those on his right hand he will say, "Come, ye blessed ;" to those on his left, "Go, ye cursed." The sentence will be no sooner pronounced than executed. "These last shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

The very word *Eternity* ought to fix our attention on this great subject. O that it may have as good an effect

effect upon every person here, as it had upon a lady, of whom the following story is related by several authors. A lady, who was fond of gaiety, spent the whole afternoon and evening, with a party at cards, and other vain amusements; and returning home, late at night, found her waiting maid diligently reading a religious book. Happening to look over her shoulder, she saw what it was, and said, Poor melancholy soul, why dost thou sit here so long poring upon thy book? After this she retired to bed, but could not sleep: she lay sighing and weeping for several hours; being repeatedly asked by her servant what was the matter, she burst into tears, and said—O, it was one word that I saw in your book that troubles me; there I saw that word *Eternity*. God grant, my friends, that we may now so consider eternity, that the word may not be a trouble to us, but a pleasure! In order to this, we must, *First*, Consider the scripture account of hell; that so we may escape it: and, *Secondly*, The scripture account of heaven, that so we may be put upon seeking it.

First, then, let us turn our thoughts to the account that the word of God gives us of hell. It is true, it is an awful subject, and wicked men do not love to hear of it: but if they cannot bear to hear of it, how will they be able to endure it? Our Saviour, in the text, calls it *Everlasting punishment*.

It is *punishment*. Now punishment is a pain inflicted on account of the breaking some law. Hell is the prison where the breakers of God's law will be confined and punished. God has made known his will in the ten commandments. These require us to love and serve him; but being fallen creatures, and unable of ourselves to do it aright, he has also given us his gospel.

pe'. Herein Christ is set forth as an all-sufficient Saviour ; able and willing to save us from the guilt already contracted by our sins ; and to renew and sanctify us, that we may comply with his will, and serve him acceptably. This is certainly our reasonable service. But the sinner refuses it. He is so strongly bound with the cords of his sins, so in love with the lusts of the flesh, so besotted with the love of the world, that he persists in his sin, notwithstanding the warnings of God ; and neglects salvation, though a thousand times invited and intreated. Thus he lives and thus he dies. What must be the consequence ? God is just, as well as merciful. His laws cannot be dispensed with. The sinner has no room to complain. He was warned ; he was intreated ; but he chose the ways of sin, and now he must take the wages ; for " the wages of sin is death." Not the death of the body only, for good men as well as bad men die ; but *the second death*, the death of the soul, in its everlasting separation from God, the fountain of life and happiness.

This is the import of that awful word *depart*. In the present world, whether men know it or not, all their comfort flows from his favour. God is the chief good, and the source of all the good in the world. It is he who has made creatures what they are. It is his sun which fills the world with light ; it is his power by which man subsists, and enjoys his senses and his health. It is from his creatures we get our food and raiment ; and though wicked men forget God in all their mercies, they are nevertheless from him, and in their proper tendency lead to him, for " the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance." But in hell, all these comforts will be withdrawn.

drawn. They did not answer their purpose to soften the hard and rebellious heart to obedience ; and now, the season of trial, and the day of grace being over, there is no end for which they should be continued.

But it is not the loss of bodily comforts only that the damned must sustain ; they must for ever lose the infinite pleasures that the redeemed will enjoy in the presence of Christ, and in the society of the blessed. This indeed they do not value now ; but they will then. They will then plainly see that heaven itself consists in the presence and favour of God. They will have a tormenting prospect of the happiness of others : so Dives, in the parable, is represented as seeing “ Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom :” and this will aggravate their misery, as it would that of a man perishing for hunger, to see others feasting ; or, as our Lord expresses it, Luke xv. 28. “ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.”

The punishment of *loss* is not all ; there is the punishment of *sense* likewise ; hell is not only the loss of happiness, but it is the sense and feeling of the most exquisite sufferings. Take an account of it from the lips of Jesus Christ himself ; speaking of hell, he says, “ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” This is the description he gives of it over and over again, in Mark ix. By “ the *worm* that dieth not,” is generally understood the gnawings of a guilty conscience ; or that painful *remorse* which sinners will feel, when they remember the sin and folly which brought them to hell. Thus, in the parable, Abraham speaks to Dives, and says, “ Son, remember, that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things.”

Memory will be a dreadful source of misery. Poor sinners will remember the good instructions they received from their parents, the faithful sermons they heard from their ministers, the solemn admonitions they had from their own consciences. They will remember what sabbaths they mispent, what mercies they abused, what judgments they slighted. They will remember with what contempt they treated serious piety; and in vain will they wish to be in the place of those they once despised. It will be intolerable for them to reflect on their folly in parting with heaven for such wretched trifles. How despicably small will the pleasures of sin then appear to them. They will not be able to bear themselves, when they think for what they have lost God, and heaven, and their souls. And this will fill them with the most horrid rage and fury. They will be inwardly racked with envy, hatred, and resentment against God, against themselves, against their tempters, and the companions of their sins.

But besides this inward torment, or "the worm that never dies," there will be *outward torment*, or, "the fire that is never quenched." The nature of this fire, or the place where it is, are matters of foolish curiosity: our business is, not to amuse ourselves with questions about it, but take care to avoid it. God, who sustained the companions of Daniel in a hot furnace, so that they were not scorched, can easily support life in the burnings of hell. The wrath of God, who, as an avenger of sin, is "a consuming fire," is the hell of hell: and "who can tell the power of his anger?" Our utmost fears of it come short of the truth. A spark of this fire in a guilty conscience is intolerable, for "a wounded spirit who can bear!"

bear !” Job, in his affliction, cried, “ The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit : the terrors of God set themselves in array against me.”

What will terribly add to the greatness of these sufferings is, that they are without any intermission, or mitigation. In the greatest miseries of this life, God is graciously pleased to allow some intervals of rest ; but of those in hell it is said, Rev. xiv. 11. “ They have no rest day nor night.” Think of this, you who never cease from sin, but do evil day and night ; the damned have no rest from their torment.

This, my friends, is a very short and slight account from the scriptures of truth, of the dreadful sufferings of miserable sinners in hell. And who, in his senses, would venture upon such a course of life, as must lead to *one hour's* sufferings of this kind ? But, O, it is not an hour, it is not a day, it is not a week, it is not a month, it is not a year, it is not seven years, or fourteen years, or an hundred years, it is not a thousand years, it is not merely as long as from the foundation of the world to this day—O how would the damned rejoice, if ten thousand years might finish their miseries ? but it is for ETERNITY. Do you start at the word ? It is Christ's word. Christ says in the text, “ these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment.” In vain do letter-learned men try to reason away the solemn truth, and lessen the duration of future punishment ; Christ says it is *eternal* ; and uses the very same word to signify an *eternal heaven* as he does to express an *eternal hell* ; (for the words are the same in the original) besides, it is said, Rev. xiv. 11. “ The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever ;” and our Lord also declares, “ their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.”

Tremble, sinner, at “the wrath *to come*.” That wrath which is now coming, and will soon be here, will even then be “wrath *to come*.” When a million million million years are past, it will still be “wrath *to come*,” because it shall never have an end !

O that we could impress upon you a lasting idea of *eternity* ! Suppose all the vast ocean to be distilled by single drops, and a thousand years to pass between every drop ; how many millions of years would it take to empty it ? Suppose the whole world to be made up of grains of sand, and one grain only to be taken away in a thousand years ; how many millions of years would it take to remove the whole ? We cannot count how long : yet we may suppose it might be done in a most immense length of time. Suppose it done. Suppose the ocean emptied, drop by drop. Suppose the globe reduced, grain by grain, to the last sand. But would eternity be spent ? Would eternity be lessened ? No, not at all. It is a *whole* eternity still ; and the torments of the damned would be as far from an end, as when the reckoning began. A minute bears some proportion to a million years ; but millions of millions, millions of millions, bear no proportion to eternity.

Sinner, have you reason ? Have you common sense ? Have you self-love ? Summon up your powers then, and determine this moment, whether you had best go on in the ways of sin, for the sake of your short-lived pleasures, thus to be repaid with everlasting woe ; or whether it will not be your wisdom this moment to forsake them, and, by the grace of God, choose the way that leads to eternal life.

Before we proceed, stop, and take a view of *sin*. Will any man but a fool “make a mock at sin,” when
he

he sees what its wages are? Is that "a madman who casteth about arrows, firebrands, and death, and faith, Am I not in sport?" He is ten thousand times more mad, who sports with sin, and laughs at that which fills hell with groans and tears. Be persuaded not to trifle, as many do, with the names of hell and damnation. Many, who cannot bear to hear these in a sermon, use them in a jesting manner, in their common discourse. This is one of Satan's ways to ruin souls. People sport with these things, till they forget their importance, and find, too late, that they are serious matters.

"Who laughs at sin, laughs at his Maker's frowns;
Laughs at the sword of justice o'er his head;
Laughs at the dear Redeemer's tears and wounds,
Who but for sin, had never groan'd nor bled!"

"Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Fly, sinner, from "the wrath to come." "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, tarry not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed." Think, what a miserable soul in hell would give to be in thy present situation. Think, how hell would resound with joy, could the good news of salvation be preached to lost souls. Well, Sirs, they are preached to *you*. This day is salvation come to this house. As yet, there is hope. Christ came to deliver from the wrath to come. It may be, you were brought there at this time, for the very purpose of being warned to fly to the refuge. Christ is a mighty Saviour. Nothing is too hard for him. "Come then, for all things are ready." If God has made you willing, depend upon it he will make you welcome. Who can tell! instead of being fuel for everlasting burnings, it may be said of you—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

We now gladly turn to the more pleasing part of our text—"but the righteous into life eternal."

Who are the righteous? "There is none righteous" upon earth, saith the scripture, "no not one"—that is, *in himself*: a righteous man, and a sinner, are two contraries; to be righteous, is to keep the law perfectly, which no mere man ever did; and no fallen man can; for "all have sinned:" sin being "the transgression of the law." How then can any man, being a sinner, become righteous? There is but one way. It is by the righteousness of Christ, put to the account of an unrighteous man. This righteousness Christ wrought out by his perfect obedience to the law. This righteousness is held out in the gospel; and when a sinner is convinced that he wants it, and must perish without it, he comes to God for it; God gives it him; he receives it by faith, puts it on, wears it, lives and dies in it, and being "found in Christ," he is admitted, in this wedding garment, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The persons called "righteous" in the text, had thus put on Christ; and the faith whereby they did so, wrought by love. The context shews how their faith wrought by works: they loved the members of Christ for Christ's sake, and shewed their love to him, by helping them in their afflictions. These are the persons who go into life eternal.

What is heaven? A carnal man can have no idea of it. It is not a mahometan paradise, where the lusts of the flesh may be indulged. No, "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel;" and, there, we find, it consists in a complete deliverance from all the evils of the present state; and in the enjoyment of all that can render the soul perfectly and for ever happy.

Need we be told that "man is born to trouble?" This is our sad, and only certain, inheritance; mingled indeed, with a thousand undeserved mercies. But all the sorrows of a believer shall cease at his death. No more excessive labour and fatigue. No pinching want and poverty. No painful, irksome, loathsome diseases. The inhabitant of heaven shall not say, "I am sick." Nor shall any of the numberless sorrows of mind we now feel, follow us to glory. We shall not suffer in our own persons, nor shall we suffer in, or by, our relations and friends. We shall "drop the body of sin" in the dust; and we shall no more be the grieved spectators of sin in the world. "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Rev. xxi. 4.

But this is not all. Our knowledge, which is now so very small, shall be wonderfully increased. It is eternal life to know God; but O, how little do we now know of him! but "the pure in heart shall see God," and know, in a moment, more than all the learned could attain in many years. But the heaven of heaven will be, the presence of Christ, being with Christ, and beholding his glory. This is what Christ, as Mediator, prayed for in behalf of his disciples. This is what Paul longed for, and wished to depart to enjoy. And what will render the vision of Christ so very excellent is, that "we shall be like him, when we see him as he is." Even our bodies, when raised from the dead, shall be made like unto his glorious body. Add to this another most desirable blessing, The constant company of the saints. Believers shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; with the prophets and apostles; and with all the redeemed of every

every nation. The employment of glorified souls will be the same, only in a far superior degree, as they delighted in on earth. But what tongue can tell, what heart can conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him ; we must die to know what heaven is. Suffice it, for the present, that it is perfect happiness, suited to the children of God, and that it is eternal.

APPLICATION.

What can be said to engage our regard to religion, more than what has now been read to you. Life and death, blessing and cursing, heaven and hell, have been set before you. Surely "*one thing is needful,*" even the care of the soul. Is there a dreadful hell ? Well ; we have been warned of the danger, and advised to fly to Jesus, the only deliverer from the wrath to come. Is there a glorious heaven ? We are invited to seek it. There is but one way to heaven, and Christ is that way. O what a Saviour is Jesus ? Can we, who deserve hell, avoid it ? Yes, glory be to him, he shed his precious blood to redeem his people from it. His perfect righteousness is the only *title* to glory ; and this righteousness is theirs, who believe in him. There must also be a *fitness* for this holy state, and this is the work of his Spirit. If we are found among the redeemed, we owe it to the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's grace. God grant that we may so hear his word, at this, and at all times, that, mixing faith with it, we may profit thereby ; and " growing up into Christ in all things, may serve and enjoy him here, and finally have " an abundant entrance afforded us, into his everlasting kingdom and glory." 6 JU 62

Now, to the God of our salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be universal and everlasting praise, Amen !